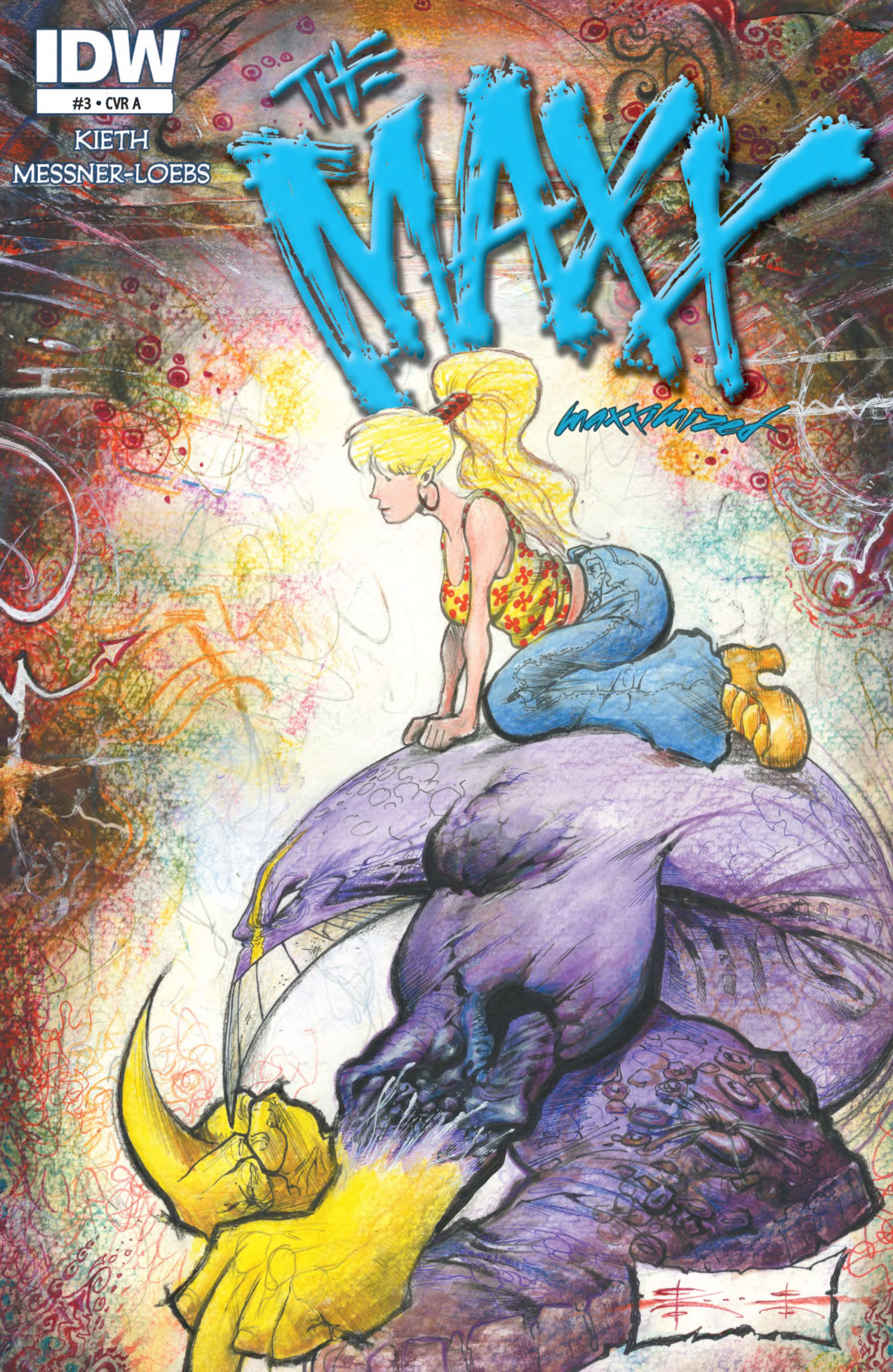
IDW
#3 • CVR A
KIETH
MESSNER-LOEBS
THE MAXX
MAXXIMIZED

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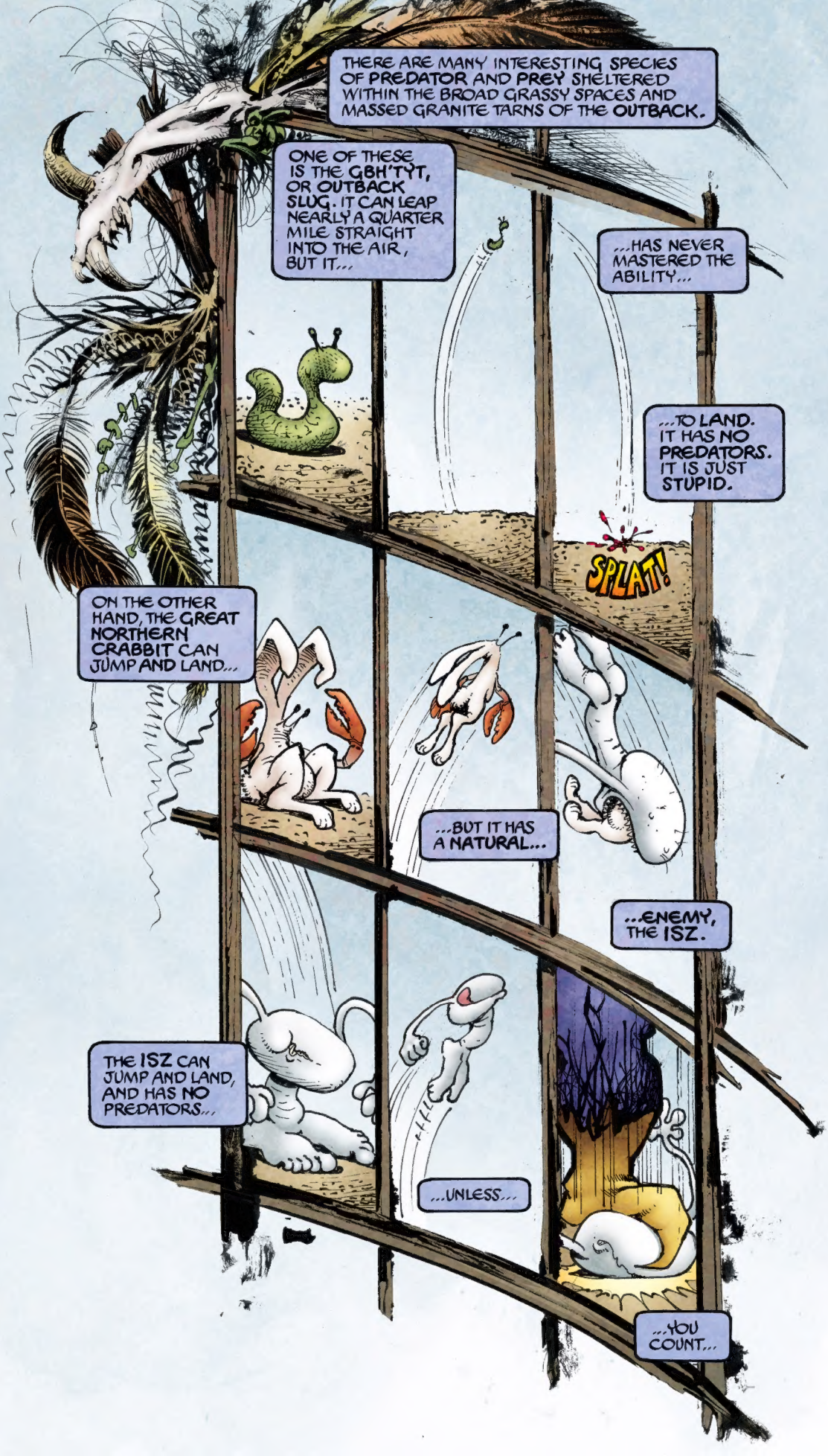
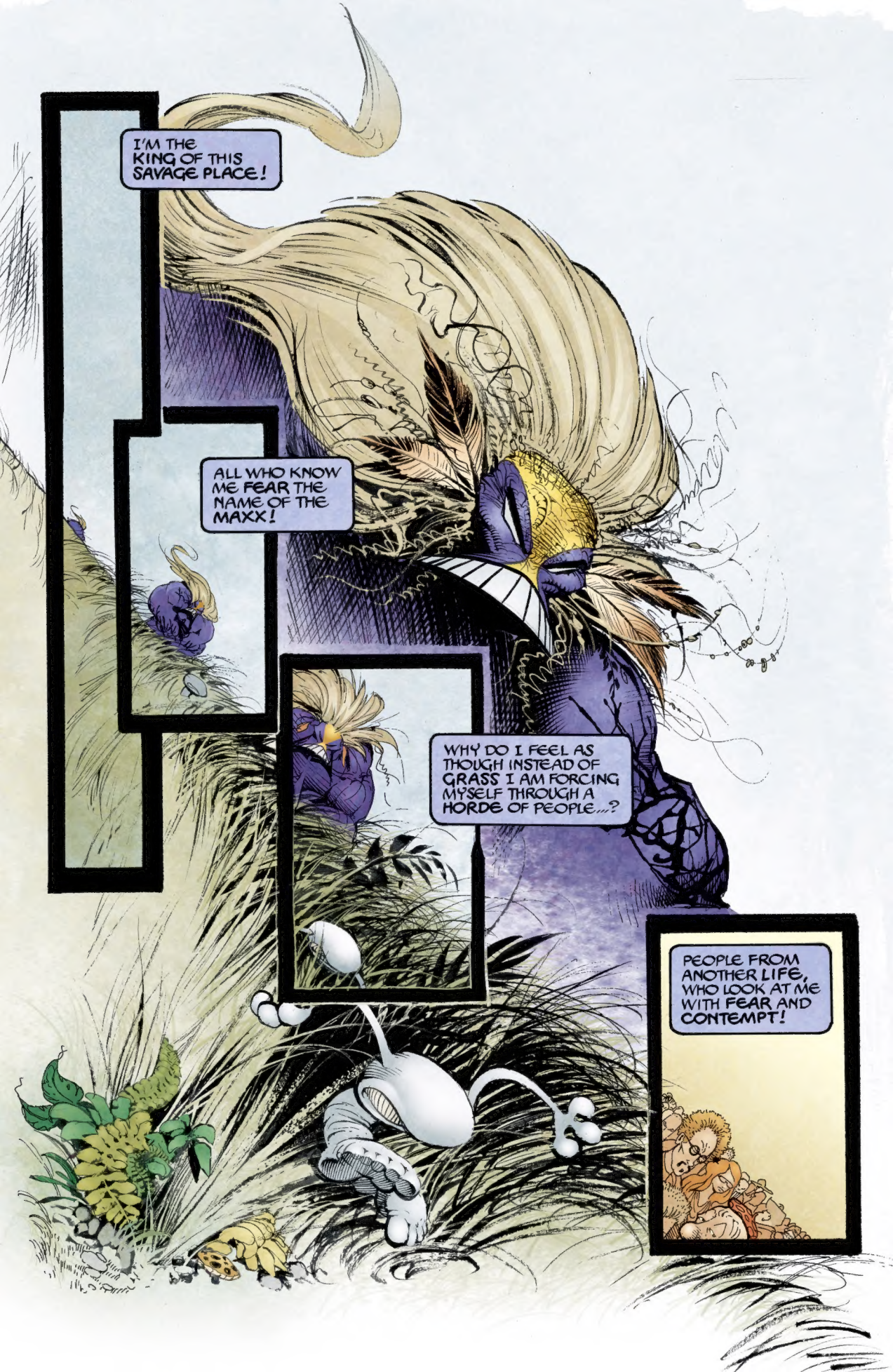
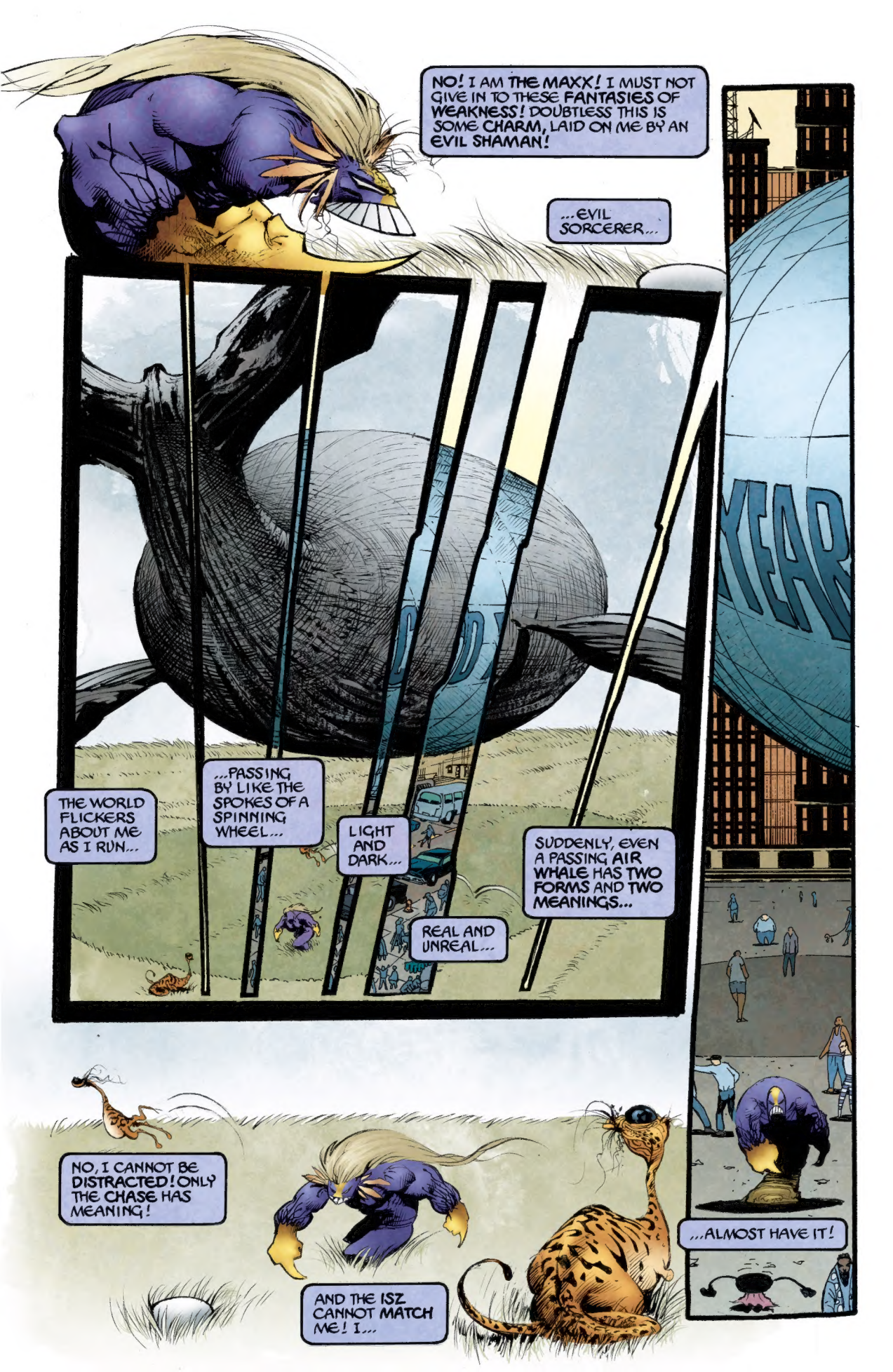
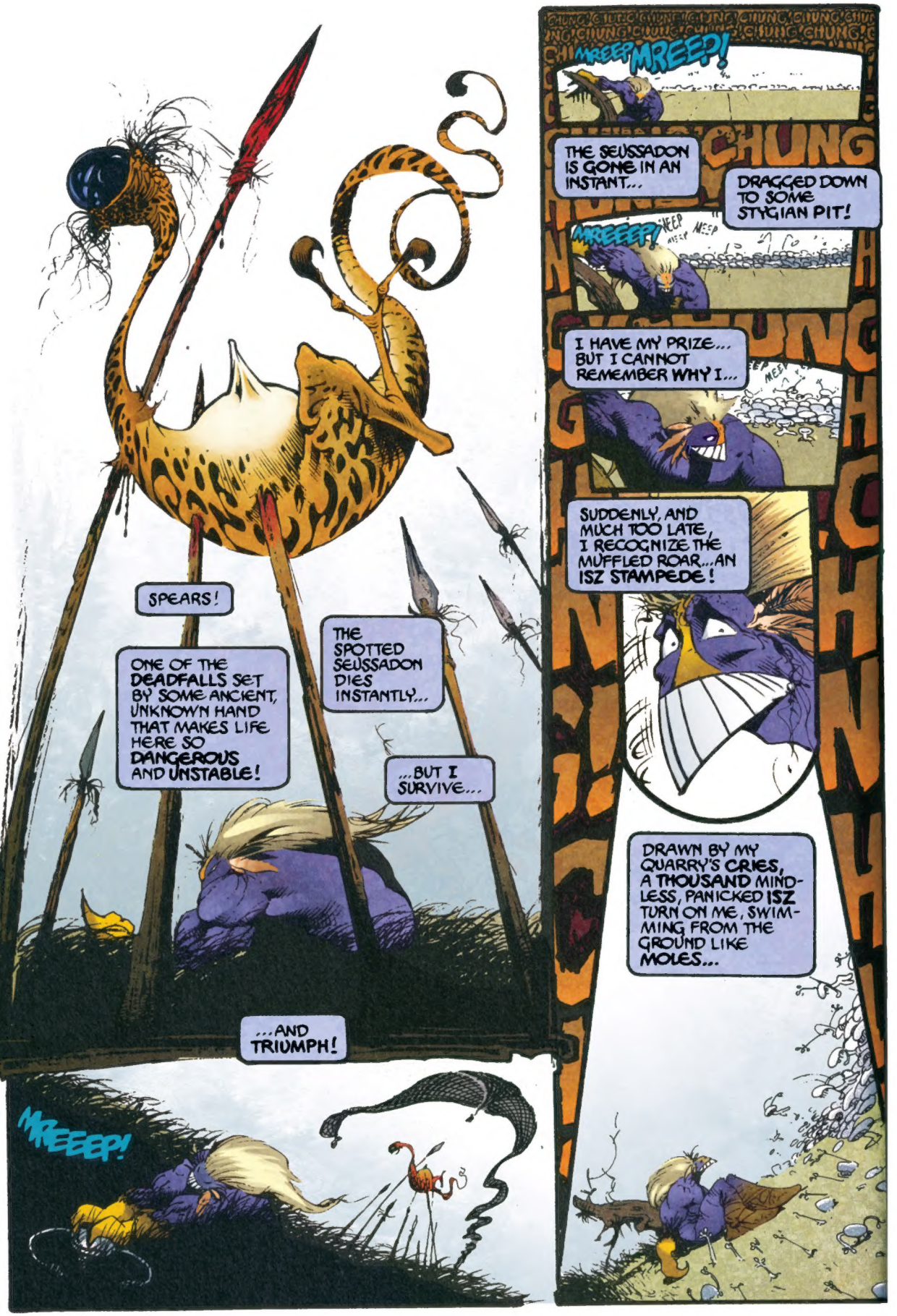

THERE ARE MANY INTERESTING SPECIES OF PREDATOR AND PREY SHELTERED WITHIN THE BROAD GRASSY SPACES AND MASSED GRANITE TARNS OF THE OUTBACK.
ONE OF THESE IS THE GBH'TYT, OR OUTBACK SLUG. IT CAN LEAP NEARLY A QUARTER MILE STRAIGHT INTO THE AIR, BUT IT...
...HAS NEVER MASTERED THE ABILITY...
...TO LAND. IT HAS NO PREDATORS. IT IS JUST STUPID.
SPLAT!
ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GREAT NORTHERN CRABBIT CAN JUMP AND LAND...
...BUT IT HAS A NATURAL...
...ENEMY, THE ISZ.
THE ISZ CAN JUMP AND LAND, AND HAS NO PREDATORS...
...UNLESS...
...YOU COUNT...

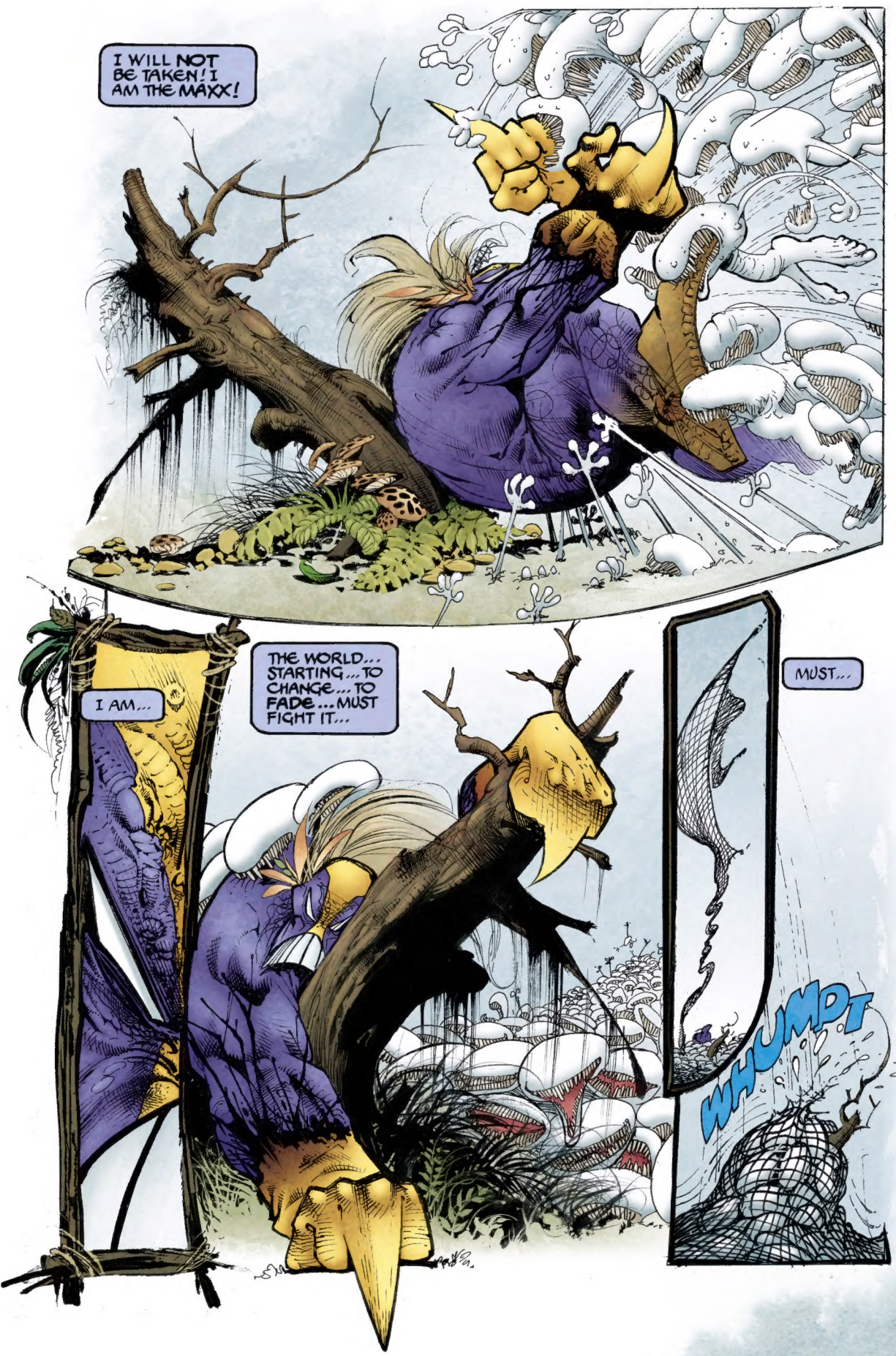
...ME!
THAT'S RIGHT, YOU LITTLE @#%#@! RUN! YOU'LL LEAD ME RIGHT TO HIM!
THE POUNDING IN MY HEAD IS LIKE AN ICE PICK, BUT I CAN'T STOP.
ONE MINUTE I SAW JULIE WINTERS IN MY MIND, DRESSED AS THE LEOPARD QUEEN AND INSANE...
...THE NEXT I WAS BACK HERE, STILL CHASING THIS LITTLE MONSTER!
THE GAWKERS GLARE AT ME, SINCE TO THEM THE ISZ LOOKS LIKE A 96 YEAR OLD GRANDMOTHER...
BUT I KNOW THAT IT IS A TOOL OF THE EVIL SORCERER, MR. GONE, WHO IS A SERIAL RAPIST AND MURDERER! HE WILL DESTROY THIS CITY UNLESS I STOP HIM!
OF COURSE, MAYBE THEY'RE ALL STARING AT ME 'CAUSE I THINK I JUST SAID ALL OF THAT OUT LOUD. OUPS.

CHUNG.CHUNG.CHUNG.CHUNG.CHUNG.
CRAP.
IT HAPPENED AGAIN.
THE MUSIC AND THE BEATING IN MY HEAD BUILD AND BUILD... AND THEN I WAKE UP BACK HERE. THE OUTBACK.
BUT THIS TIME I'VE GOT TO KEEP MY CITY MEMORIES!
I'VE GOT TO REMEMBER ABOUT MR. GONE TERRORIZING THE CITY! REMEMBER ALL THE PEOPLE WHO'LL BE MUTILATED OR KILLED IF I DON'T FIND HIM.
I WONDER WHY I'M CHASING THIS ISZ?
REMEMBER...
WELL, I PROBABLY HAD A GOOD REASON.


I'M THE KING OF THIS SAVAGE PLACE!
ALL WHO KNOW ME FEAR THE NAME OF THE MAXX!
WHY DO I FEEL AS THOUGH INSTEAD OF GRASS I AM FORCING MYSELF THROUGH A HORDE OF PEOPLE....?
PEOPLE FROM ANOTHER LIFE, WHO LOOK AT ME WITH FEAR AND CONTEMPT!


NO! I AM THE MAXX! I MUST NOT GIVE IN TO THESE FANTASIES OF WEAKNESS! DOUBTLESS THIS IS SOME CHARM, LAID ON ME BY AN EVIL SHAMAN!
...EVIL SORCERER...
THE WORLD FLICKERS ABOUT ME AS I RUN...
...PASSING BY LIKE THE SPOKES OF A SPINNING WHEEL...
LIGHT AND DARK...
REAL AND UNREAL...
SUDDENLY, EVEN A PASSING AIR WHALE HAS TWO FORMS AND TWO MEANINGS...
NO, I CANNOT BE DISTRACTED! ONLY THE CHASE HAS MEANING!
AND THE ISZ CANNOT MATCH ME! I...
...ALMOST HAVE IT!


SPEARS!
ONE OF THE DEADFALLS SET BY SOME ANCIENT, UNKNOWN HAND THAT MAKES LIFE HERE SO DANGEROUS AND UNSTABLE!
THE SPOTTED SEUSSADON DIES INSTANTLY...
...BUT I SURVIVE...
...AND TRIUMPH!
MREEEP!
MREEP MREEP!
THE SEUSSADON IS GONE IN AN INSTANT...
DRAGGED DOWN TO SOME STYGIAN PIT!
MREEEP!
I HAVE MY PRIZE... BUT I CANNOT REMEMBER WHY I...
SUDDENLY, AND MUCH TOO LATE, I RECOGNIZE THE MUFFLED ROAR...AN ISZ STAMPEDE!
DRAWN BY MY QUARRY'S CRIES, A THOUSAND MINDLESS, PANICKED ISZ TURN ON ME, SWIMMING FROM THE GROUND LIKE MOLES...


I WILL NOT BE TAKEN! I AM THE MAXX!
I AM...
THE WORLD... STARTING... TO CHANGE... TO FADE... MUST FIGHT IT...
MUST...
WHUMPT

NO!

SLICE SLICE SLICE

CRUNCH

MEEP MEEP MEEP

SQUISH

SPLAT

SQUISH

CHEEE

BUDDA BUDDA

UHAH

HACK HACK HACK HACK

MEEP

CRUNCH

THEY ARE ALL DEAD! ALL! I HAVE KILLED ALL...

...UM...

I HAVE PENETRATED TO THE WET, SOFT, WHITE, SQUISHY, BE-TOOTHED HEART OF DARKNESS!

BUT WHY?

SOMETHING ABOUT THE LEOPARD QUEEN... A MAGICIAN...
AND A STRANGE, DIRTY LAND, FILLED WITH CITIES AND CRIME... CRIME ONLY I CAN FIGHT...
I CAN'T THINK ABOUT THESE FANTASIES NOW... I HAVE TO RUN...
AVOID THE NETS... AVOID THE SPEARS...
SPLAT!

DAMN!
THE NET WAS TOO FAST FOR ME! I FEEL MYSELF DRAGGED UNDER-GROUND, TO SOME DESPERATE FATE!
RIP
BUT I WILL BE FREE!
FOR I AM...
...THE...
THUMP

mommy!

NO!

I HATE WAKING UP TO SOMEONE ELSE'S NIGHT-MARE.

I ESPECIALLY HATE WAKING UP IN SOME-ONE ELSE'S BATHROOM.

AND WHAT'S EVEN WORSE, THIS BATHROOM HAS LEAKY PIPES!

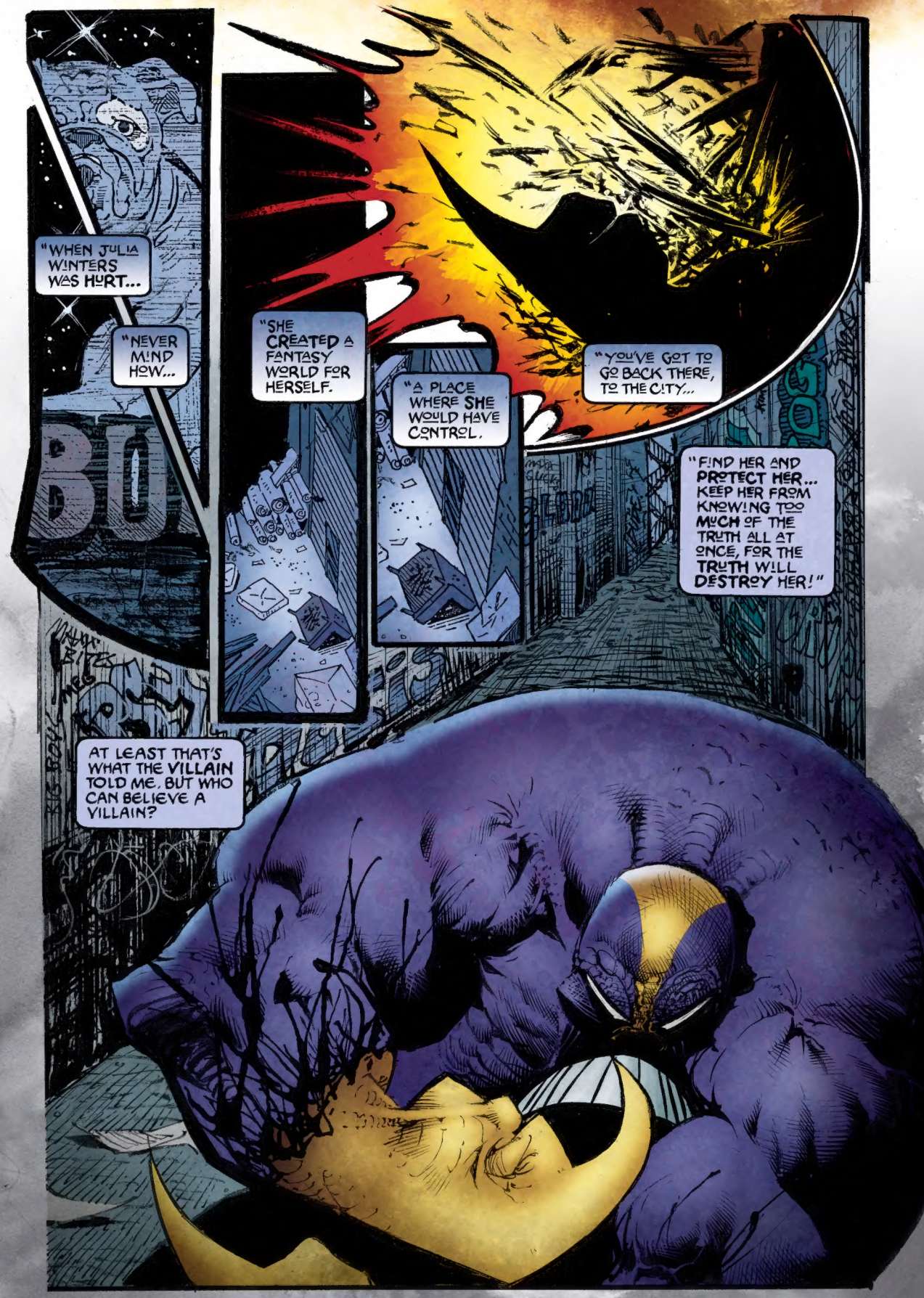
DRIP DRIP DRIP

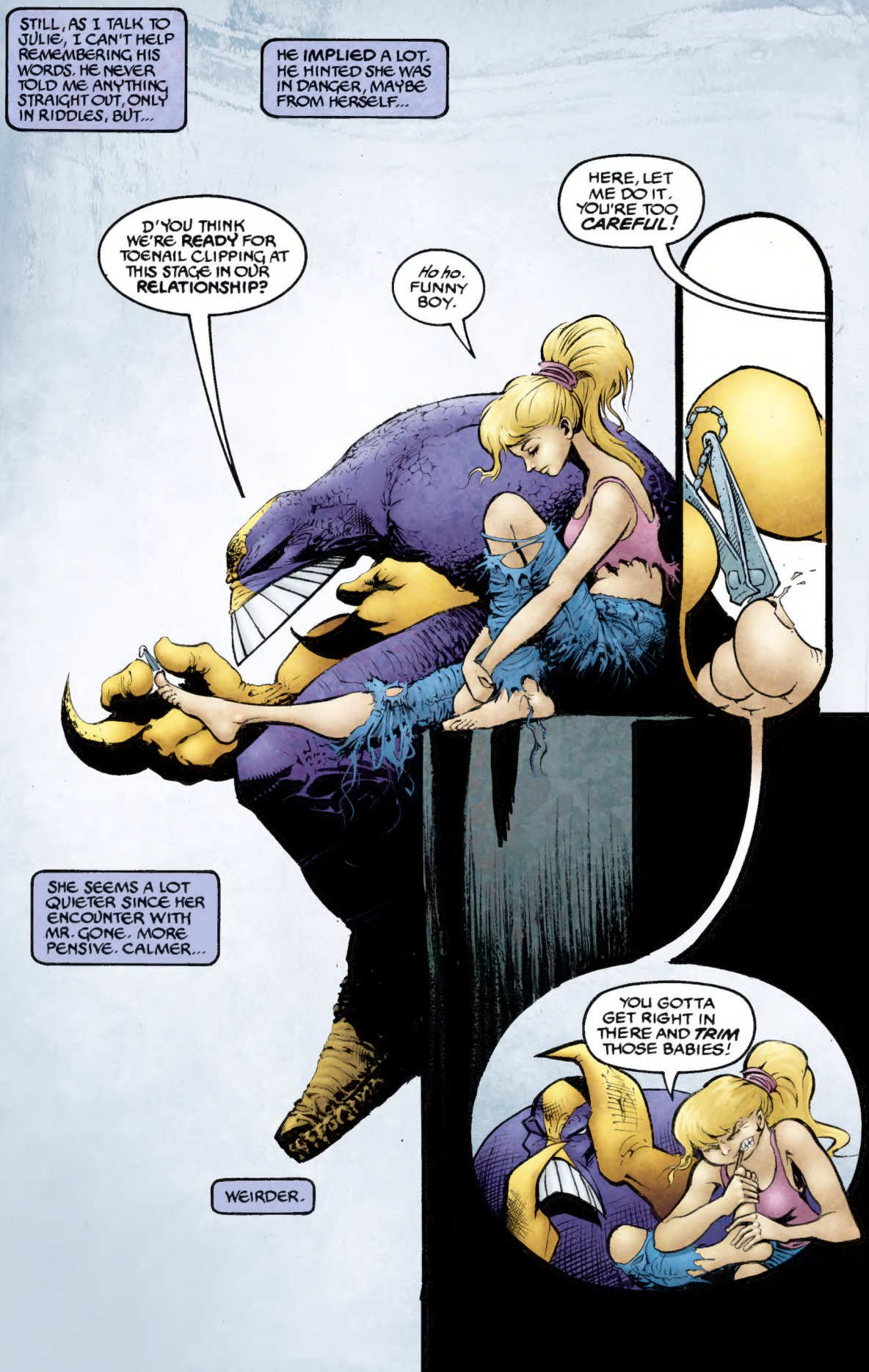
SPLOOSH
A LITTLE CONFUSED BY THE MODERN TECHNOLOGY, EH, BR'ER LAPP!N?
BOO!
PRETTY NEAT MASK, RIGHT? I USE IT TO FRIGHTEN THE NAT!VES AWAY FROM MY !SZ HARVEST!NG OPERATIONS.
I NOT ONLY NEED TO TRAP THOSE LITTLE BUGGERS, BUT ENOUGH LARGER AN!MALS TO KEEP THEM FED, AS WELL!
DON'T WORRY, IT'S ONLY ME, MR. GONE ... MAN OF TWO WORLDS, AND MASTER OF D!SGU!SE!
G!VE TH!S TO JULIE W!NTERS WHEN YOU SEE HER. AFTER MY ENCOUNTER W!TH HER ON THE F!FTH ZONE, I MAY NOT HAVE A HEAD TO GO BACK TO!
WHAP!

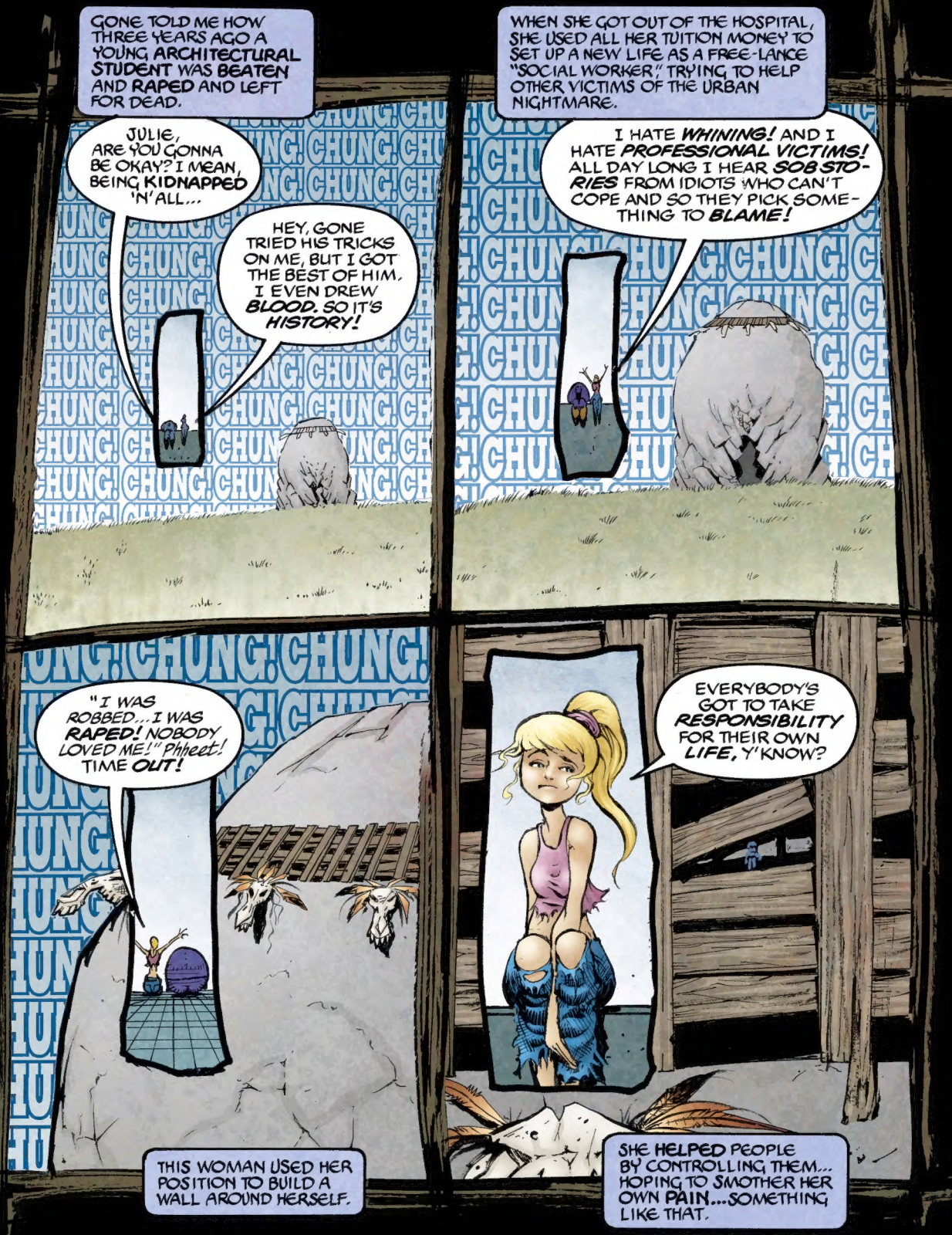
AHH, ANOTHER TUSSLE! GOOD FOR THE SOUL!
YOU REALLY DON'T REMEMBER OUR FIGHT BACK AT THE GAS STATION, DO YOU?
EAT DROPPINGS, PUCKWALLOW!
CRACK!
NAUGHTY, NAUGHTY, BR'ER LAPP!N! DO THEY TEACH YOU TO TALK L!KE THAT BACK AT THE WARREN?
MEAT-BREATH! ANT TEEKLER!
AND YOU'RE A LOT STRONGER ON TH!S S!DE! I'LL HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT!
HAIRLESS SUCKLING!

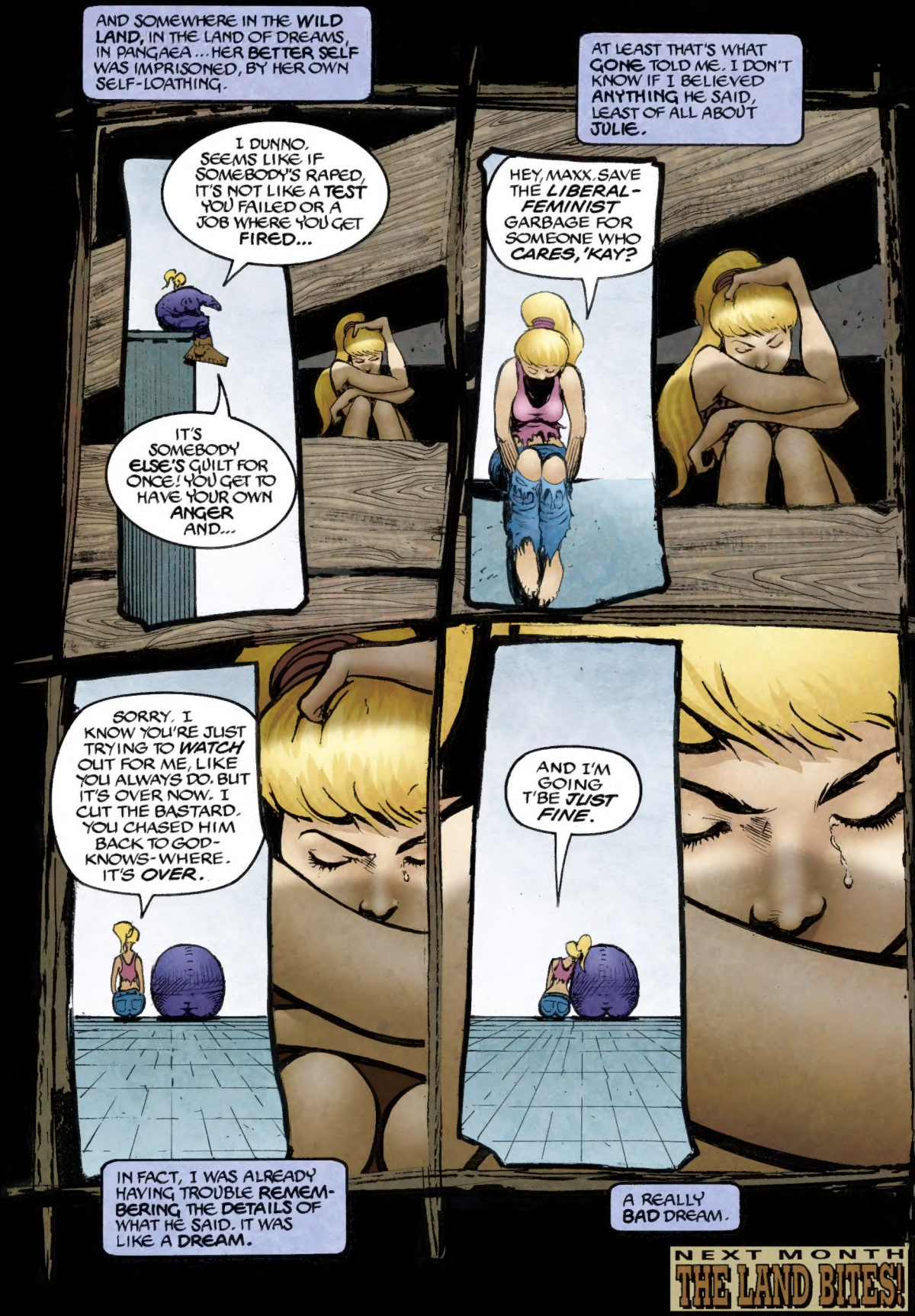
POP
MAXX! WE CAN'T WASTE OUR TIME LIKE THIS!
WHY NOT?
I FIGHT EVIL... AND YOU ARE EVIL!
NO, NO! THAT'S JUST IT! YOU'RE NO SUPERHERO! YOU'RE A PROTECTOR... JULIE WIN... I MEAN THE LEOPARD QUEEN'S PROTECTOR.
HUH?
POP
THE TWO OF YOU ARE SOUL-LINKED! WHAT SHE FEELS, YOU FEEL!
AND SHE IS LOST...
LOST IN THE CITY AND IN HER OWN MIND!
WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE YOU, VILE SORCERER?
MAXX
MAXX
MAXX
MAXX!
WHAT?
LET ME JUST CONVINCE YOU...
POP
...WITH ONE WORD...
POP
MOMMY.

YOU SEE, I KNOW ABOUT THE DREAM... ABOUT THE DOLL... ABOUT EVERYTHING!
I KNOW WHO YOU REALLY ARE...
WHO YOU WERE BEFORE YOU FOUND THE MASK LYING IN THE MUD...
AND WHAT YOU ARE NOW, BEHIND THE MASK, THOUGH YOU'VE BEEN TOO COWARDLY TO LOOK!
TELL ME.
MAYBE LATER. THE TRUTH ABOUT YOU IS ONLY EMBARRASSING ...JULIE'S TRUTH COULD DESTROY HER!
AND THIS... JULIE AND THE QUEEN OF THE LEOPARD WOMEN... ARE ONE?
YEP, MAN, THIS IS GONNA BE A LONG NIGHT!
THIS PRIMITIVE PLANE, WHICH YOU THINK IS AUSTRALIA AND I CALL PANGAEA, IS ALL THAT IS REAL...
THE OTHER WORLD IS A DREAM, WHERE WE ARE TRAPPED PLAYING OUT...
...OUR DEEPEST FANTASIES...


"WHEN JULIA WINTERS WAS HURT...
"NEVER MIND HOW...
"SHE CREATED A FANTASY WORLD FOR HERSELF.
"A PLACE WHERE SHE WOULD HAVE CONTROL.
"YOU'VE GOT TO GO BACK THERE, TO THE CITY...
"FIND HER AND PROTECT HER... KEEP HER FROM KNOWING TOO MUCH OF THE TRUTH ALL AT ONCE, FOR THE TRUTH WILL DESTROY HER!"
AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT THE VILLAIN TOLD ME, BUT WHO CAN BELIEVE A VILLAIN?


STILL, AS I TALK TO JULIE, I CAN'T HELP REMEMBERING HIS WORDS. HE NEVER TOLD ME ANYTHING STRAIGHT OUT, ONLY IN RIDDLES, BUT...
HE IMPLIED A LOT. HE HINTED SHE WAS IN DANGER, MAYBE FROM HERSELF...
D'YOU THINK WE'RE READY FOR TOENAIL CLIPPING AT THIS STAGE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP?
Ho ho. FUNNY BOY.
HERE, LET ME DO IT. YOU'RE TOO CAREFUL!
SHE SEEMS A LOT QUIETER SINCE HER ENCOUNTER WITH MR. GONE. MORE PENSIVE. CALMER...
WEIRDER.
YOU GOTTA GET RIGHT IN THERE AND TRIM THOSE BABIES!


GONE TOLD ME HOW THREE YEARS AGO A YOUNG ARCHITECTURAL STUDENT WAS BEATEN AND RAPED AND LEFT FOR DEAD.
JULIE, ARE YOU GONNA BE OKAY? I MEAN, BEING KIDNAPPED 'N' ALL...
HEY, GONE TRIED HIS TRICKS ON ME, BUT I GOT THE BEST OF HIM, I EVEN DREW BLOOD. SO IT'S HISTORY!
WHEN SHE GOT OUT OF THE HOSPITAL, SHE USED ALL HER TUITION MONEY TO SET UP A NEW LIFE AS A FREE-LANCE "SOCIAL WORKER", TRYING TO HELP OTHER VICTIMS OF THE URBAN NIGHTMARE.
I HATE WHINING! AND I HATE PROFESSIONAL VICTIMS! ALL DAY LONG I HEAR SOB STORIES FROM IDIOTS WHO CAN'T COPE AND SO THEY PICK SOMETHING TO BLAME!
"I WAS ROBBED... I WAS RAPED! NOBODY LOVED ME!" Phheet! TIME OUT!
EVERYBODY'S GOT TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN LIFE, Y'KNOW?
THIS WOMAN USED HER POSITION TO BUILD A WALL AROUND HERSELF.
SHE HELPED PEOPLE BY CONTROLLING THEM... HOPING TO SMOTHER HER OWN PAIN...SOMETHING LIKE THAT.


AND SOMEWHERE IN THE WILD LAND, IN THE LAND OF DREAMS, IN PANGAEA... HER BETTER SELF WAS IMPRISONED, BY HER OWN SELF-LOATHING.
I DUNNO, SEEMS LIKE IF SOMEBODY'S RAPED, IT'S NOT LIKE A TEST YOU FAILED OR A JOB WHERE YOU GET FIRED...
IT'S SOMEBODY ELSE'S GUILT FOR ONCE! YOU GET TO HAVE YOUR OWN ANGER AND...
AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT GONE TOLD ME. I DON'T KNOW IF I BELIEVED ANYTHING HE SAID, LEAST OF ALL ABOUT JULIE.
HEY, MAXX, SAVE THE LIBERAL-FEMINIST GARBAGE FOR SOMEONE WHO CARES, 'KAY?
SORRY. I KNOW YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO WATCH OUT FOR ME, LIKE YOU ALWAYS DO. BUT IT'S OVER NOW. I CUT THE BASTARD. YOU CHASED HIM BACK TO GOD-KNOWS-WHERE. IT'S OVER.
AND I'M GOING T'BE JUST FINE.
IN FACT, I WAS ALREADY HAVING TROUBLE REMEMBERING THE DETAILS OF WHAT HE SAID. IT WAS LIKE A DREAM.
A REALLY BAD DREAM.
NEXT MONTH
THE LAND BITES!